Amendments to the Claims:

   This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently amended) A computer implemented method for creating customized disk images for loading software onto a computer, the method comprising the steps:

   receiving software requirements for a given computer system from a plurality of users;

   determining (a) a plurality of software components that currently exist and that will fulfill the software requirements while addressing constraints and affinities between said plurality of software components and (b) a respective plurality of configuration options that reflect current best practices with regard to said plurality of software components; and

   generating a disk image containing said plurality of software components configured according to said respective plurality of configuration options.

2.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein said determining step applies rules to the software requirements to identify software components that comply with the software requirements.

3.   (Cancelled)

4.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the rules include rules mapping a software requirement into a corresponding software component.

5.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the rules include rules specifying when particular versions of a particular software component are to be utilized.

6.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the rules include rules specifying installation options regarding a particular software component.

7.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the rules include rules specifying how to test a particular software component.

8.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, further comprising:
testing the disk image.

9.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 8, wherein testing the disk image includes verifying that said plurality of software components complies with the software requirements.

10.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 8, wherein testing the disk image includes verifying that said plurality of software components complies with at least one rule.

11.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, further comprising:
generating a difference image that represents differences between the disk image and another existing disk image, whereby the another existing disk image may be updated to match the disk image by applying the difference image to the another existing disk image.

12.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the software requirements are received through a network that includes the Internet.

13.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the software requirements can be received in terms of customer needs rather than specific software components.

14.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the requirements are represented in a structured format.

15.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 14, wherein the structured format is Extensible Markup Language (XML).

16.   (Currently amended) A computer-implemented method for creating a customized disk image for loading software onto a computer, the method comprising the computer-implemented steps:
parsing a plurality of inputs regarding a desired computer system to extract specifications regarding software;
evaluating a plurality of rules with respect to the plurality of inputs to derive a set of software components conforming to the specifications, said set of software components being chosen from existing software components;

evaluating a second plurality of rules with respect to the plurality of inputs to derive a set of configuration options conforming to at least the specifications;

storing each software component from the set of software components on a storage device;

configuring each software component stored on the storage device in accordance to the set of configuration options; and

generating a disk image from contents of the storage device.

17.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of inputs are requests from hypertext browsers.

18.   (Currently amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of inputs are XML documents.

19.   (Currently amended) A computer program product stored in a computer-readable medium and comprising functional descriptive data that, when executed by a computer, enables the computer to create customized disk images for loading software onto a computer, including the steps:

receiving software requirements for a given computer system from a plurality of users;

determining (a) a plurality of software components that currently exist and will fulfill the software requirements while addressing constraints and affinities between said plurality of software components and (b) a respective plurality of configuration options that reflect current best practices with regard to said plurality of software components; and

generating a disk image containing said plurality of software components configured according to said respective plurality of configuration options.

20.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 19, wherein said determining step applies rules to the software requirements to identify software component that comply with the software requirements.

21.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the rules are stored in a database.

22.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the rules include rules mapping a software requirement into a corresponding software component.

23.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the rules include rules specifying when particular versions of a particular software component are to be utilized.

24.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the rules include rules specifying installation options regarding a particular software component.

25.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the rules include rules specifying how to test a particular software component.

26.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 19, comprising additional functional descriptive data that, when executed by the computer, enables the computer to perform additional acts including:

    testing the disk image.

27.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 26, wherein testing the disk image includes verifying that said plurality of software components complies with the software requirements.

28.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 26, wherein testing the disk image includes verifying that said plurality of software components complies with at least one rule.

29.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 19, comprising additional functional descriptive data that, when executed by the computer, enables the computer to perform additional acts including:

    generating a difference image that represents differences between the disk image and another existing disk image, whereby the another existing disk image may be updated to match the disk image by applying the difference image to the another existing disk image.

30.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the software requirements are received through a network that includes the Internet.

31.   (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the software requirements can be received in terms of customer needs rather than specific software components.

32.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 19, wherein the requirements are represented in a structured format.

33.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 32, wherein the structured format is Extensible Markup Language (XML).

34.   (Currently amended) A data processing system capable of creating customized disk images for loading software onto a computer, said data processing system comprising:

       instructions for receiving software requirements for a given system from a plurality of users;

       instructions for determining (a) a plurality of software components that currently exist and that will fulfill the software requirements while addressing constraints and affinities between said plurality of software components and (b) a respective plurality of configuration options that reflect current best practices with regard to said plurality of software components; and

       instructions for generating a disk image containing said plurality of software components configured according to said respective plurality of configuration options.

35.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 34, wherein said instructions for determining applies rules to the software requirements to identify software component that comply with the software requirements.

36.   (Original) The data processing system of claim 35, wherein the rules are stored in a database.

37.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 36, wherein the rules include rules mapping a software requirement into a corresponding software component.

38.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 36, wherein the rules include rules specifying when particular versions of a particular software component are to be utilized.

39.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 36, wherein the rules include rules specifying installation options regarding a particular software component.

40.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 36, wherein the rules include rules specifying how to test a particular software component.

41.   (Original) The data processing system of claim 34, further comprising:
means for testing the disk image.

42.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 41, wherein testing the disk image includes verifying that said plurality of software components complies with the software requirements.

43.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 41, wherein testing the disk image includes verifying that item said plurality of software complies with at least one rule.

44.   (Original) The data processing system of claim 34, further comprising:
means for generating a difference image that represents differences between the disk image and another existing disk image, whereby the another existing disk image may be updated to match the disk image by applying the difference image to the another existing disk image.

45.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 34, wherein the software requirements are received through a network that includes the Internet.

46.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 34, wherein the software requirements can be received in terms of customer needs rather than specific software components.

47.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 34, wherein the requirements are represented in a structured format, such as Extensible Markup Language (XML).

48.   (Cancelled)

49.   (Currently amended) The computer implemented method of claim 1, further comprising storing said disk image on a computer-readable media and distributing said computer-readable media to a client.

50.   (Previously Presented) The data processing system of claim 34, further comprising instructions for storing said disk image on a computer-readable media, wherein said computer-readable media can be distributed to a client.